

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO EGYPT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS SYRIA

AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON UK

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0480

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PGOV, PFOR, PINT, BA

SUBJECT : BAHRAINI VIEWS ON GULF COOPERATION

REFERENCE : (A) MANAMA 163, 268, 345, 328

(B) MANAMA 1028, DECEMBER 8, 1974

(C) MANAMA 0922, NOVEMBER 7, 1974

1. IN WAKE OF AMIR'S DECEMBER VISIT WITH LATE KING FAISAL AND PRIME MINISTER'S RECENT TRIP TO KUWAIT, FROM BAHRAIN PERSPECTIVE AT LEAST THE PREVIOUSLY GLACIAL PACE OF COOPERATION AMONG THE GULF STATES APPEARS TO BE QUICKENING SOMEWHAT. APRIL 19 I ASKED DEVELOPMENT MINISTER SHIRAWI IF HE SENSED SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN GULF COOPERATION.

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2. ACKNOWLEDGING, AS FOREIGN MINISTER HAD EARLIER, THAT

THE SERIOUS SEARCH FOR A FORMULA FOR INSTITUTIONALIZED GULF POLITICAL COOPERATION IS PREMATURE, SHIRAWI AGREED COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ARE PICKING UP AND OUTLINED FOLLOWING CONCEPT OF HOW EFFORT TOWARD GREATER COOPERATION AMONG GULF STATES CAN PROCEED SUCCESSFULLY:

(A) BECAUSE OF EXTERNAL ORIENTATION OF GULF STATES AND HISTORY (EXCEPT FOR SAUDI ARABIA) OF SOLVING MOST OF THEIR PROBLEMS THROUGH LONDON, UPON REACHING FULL INDEPENDENCE THE LEADERS OF THE VARIOUS STATES HARDLY KNEW ONE ANOTHER. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY TRUE AMONG THE COMMONER MINISTERS HOLDING VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SERVICE PORTFOLIOS. SINCE 1972 THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED NOTABLY UNDER AN UMBRELLA OF VAGUE RHETORIC BY GULF RULERS ABOUT COOPERATION. MINISTERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP IN MANY CASES PERSONAL RAPPORT AND CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN OTHER STATES. THIS IS NOW EXTENDING TO UNDER SECRETARY LEVEL AND BELOW. AS RESULT, THERE IS INCREASING EXCHANGE OF IDEAS; THE MINISTERS IN RELATIVELY SMALL STATES LIKE BAHRAIN FEEL FREE TO ASK ASSISTANCE FROM COUNTERPARTS IN LARGER AND RICHER COUNTRIES SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT. HENCE, PATCHWORK OF SIGNIFICANT IF UNSPECTACULAR DAY-TO-DAY COOPERATION IS DEVELOPING, MANIFESTED IN SUCH UNDERTAKINGS AS KUWAIT'S TRAINING OF BAHRAINI POWER PLANT CREWS AND SAUDI HELP IN GETTING BAHRAIN'S TELEVISION STATION OPERATING EFFECTIVELY.

(B) BEYOND THIS THERE IS NEED TO BUILD MAJOR ECONOMIC INCENTIVE FOR FUTURE POLITICAL COOPERATION. GOB REALIZES THAT WEALTH AND EXTERNAL ORIENTATION OF GULF OIL STATES MAKE IT EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF REAL COMPLEMENTARITY AMONG THEIR ECONOMIES. EVERYONE WANTS TO BUILD HIS OWN OIL REFINERY, FERTILIZER PLANT AND FLOUR MILL AND CAN AFFORD TO DO SO. INTEGRATION OF "COTTAGE INDUSTRIES" IS NEITHER ECONOMICALLY PERSUASIVE NOR POLITICALLY WORTH THE TROUBLE. FOR INSTANCE, ACCORDING TO SHIRAWI, THE GULF MARKET IS BIG ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY ONE MAJOR AIR CONDITIONING FACTORY, BUT IT WOULD PRODUCE "SECOND-RATE" AIR CONDITIONERS AT RELATIVELY HIGH COST. MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO PROPOSE IT WOULD SEND "85 EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTORS" YAPPING TO THEIR RESPECTIVE KINGS, AMIRS AND SULTANS WITH VENGEANCE IN THEIR HEARTS. THUS, ACCORDING TO SHIRAWI AT LEAST, IF NOT GOB AS ENTITY, CONFIDENTIAL

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GULF LEADERS MUST SEEK LARGE SCALE COOPERATIVE ENDEAVORS WHICH ARE DRAMATIC INCONCEPT, COSTLY IN CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS, AND BY AND LARGE NOT THREATENING TO LOCAL INTERESTS IN INDIVIDUAL GULF STATES. SHIRAWI IDENTIFIES THREE KEY AREAS FOR COOPERATION:

(A) AIR TRANSPORT, NOTING THAT INsofar AS LOWER GULF STATES ARE CONCERNED, ONE OF THE MOTIVES BEHIND ACCELERATING ACQUISITION OF EXPENSIVE JETS FOR GULF AIR IS TO PUT THIS

REGIONAL CARRIER BEYOND THE COMPETITIVE REACH OF INDIVIDUAL LOWER GULF STATES WHICH MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO START NATIONAL AIRLINES;

(B) MARINE TRANSPORT, BOTH TANKERS AND FREIGHTERS, AND

(C) NUCLEAR POWER. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY WHETHER NUCLEAR POWER MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE FOR OIL RICH GULF STATES, SHIRAWI PLEADS THAT VALIDITY OF THIS CONCEPT LIES LARGELY IN ITS POLITICAL VALUE. IT WOULD BE HIGHLY DRAMATIC, FUTURISTIC COOPERATIVE UNDERTAKING FOR GULF OIL STATES TO BE IMPLEMENTED OVER DECADE OR SO TO ASSURE THEIR WELFARE IN "POST OIL ERA".

3. COMMENT: SHIRAWI'S EXPOSITION IS OBVIOUSLY LIABLE TO FAIRLY WITHERING CRITIQUE BY ECONOMISTS, BUSINESSMEN AND VARIOUS ASSORTMENT OF GULF STATE CHAUVINISTS. IT IS MORE A PHILOSOPHICAL OVERVIEW THAN A DETAILED PROPOSAL. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS MOST INTERESTING EXPOSITION I HAVE YET HEARD ON HOW MINI-STATES OF GULF CAN HOPE TO FIND A WAY TO EVENTUAL POLITICAL UNITY IN THE ABSENCE OF SERIOUS ECONOMIC INCENTIVES TO DO SO. RUNNING THROUGHOUT SHIRAWI'S DISCOURSE WAS AN INTERESTING "BAHRAINI" REFRAIN: AMONG THE GULF STATES BAHRAIN GETS ALONG BETTER WITH KUWAIT THAN DOES SAUDI ARABIA. AMONG THE GULF STATES BAHRAIN UNDERSTANDS THE LOWER GULF BETTER THAN DOES EITHER SAUDI ARABIA OR KUWAIT. HENCE, WHEN THE GREAT MOVES TOWARD GULF COOPERATION GET UNDERWAY, BAHRAIN MUST PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN BRINGING EVERYONE ELSE TOGETHER, WITH EVERYONE ELSE PUTTING UP MOST OF THE CASH, OF COURSE.
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